

# Wattles

This issue describes the wattles known to me to occur within 20 km of Castlemaine.

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## WAYS IN WHICH WATTLES DIFFER

Wattles are legumes (related to the pea and cassia families), and like other legumes, the seeds are in pods and the roots have nitrogen fixing nodules.

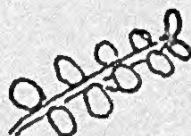
The flowers are small with regular sepals and petals. The flowers may be grouped into balls or into rods. The balls may be on stalks from the leaf bases or in sprays.



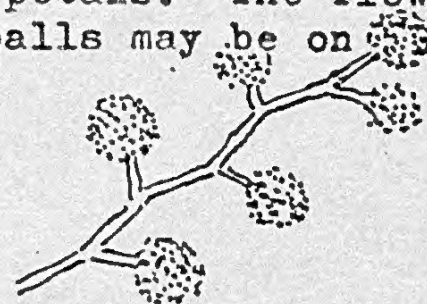
Wattle flower  
(enlarged)



Flower  
buds in  
a  
ball



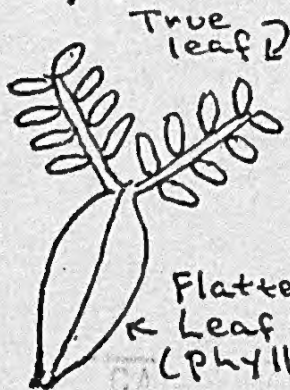
Flower buds  
in a rod  
(a spike)



Flower balls in  
a spray  
(a raceme)

All wattles have fernlike leaves when young, but many species lose these. The flattened leaf-stalks carry out the functions of the leaves. These flattened leaf-stalks are correctly called phyllodes. However, in this article, both the true leaves and the phyllodes are called leaves. The true leaves are divided into leaflets and the leaflets are further divided into pinnules.

Leaves and phyllodes often have glands, the function of which is not certain. The glands are very useful in recognising species.



Flattened  
leaf stalk  
(Phyllode)

YOUNG PLANT WITH  
BOTH LEAVES and  
PHYLLODES

The leaf has two leaflets.  
Each leaflet has 4 pair of  
pinnules.

## LEAVES WITH 2 PARALLEL VEINS

### A. BOTH VEINS EQUALLY NOTICABLE

Recognise by the two parallel veins and by the sticky (as though varnished) upper leaves. A medium shrub with bright yellow ball flowers in spring.

#### VARNISH WATTLE

*A. vernicaflua*.

Not very common in the district. Occurs on the Dunolly Road about 1 km past the Cairn Curran turn-off, and on Mt Tarrengower.

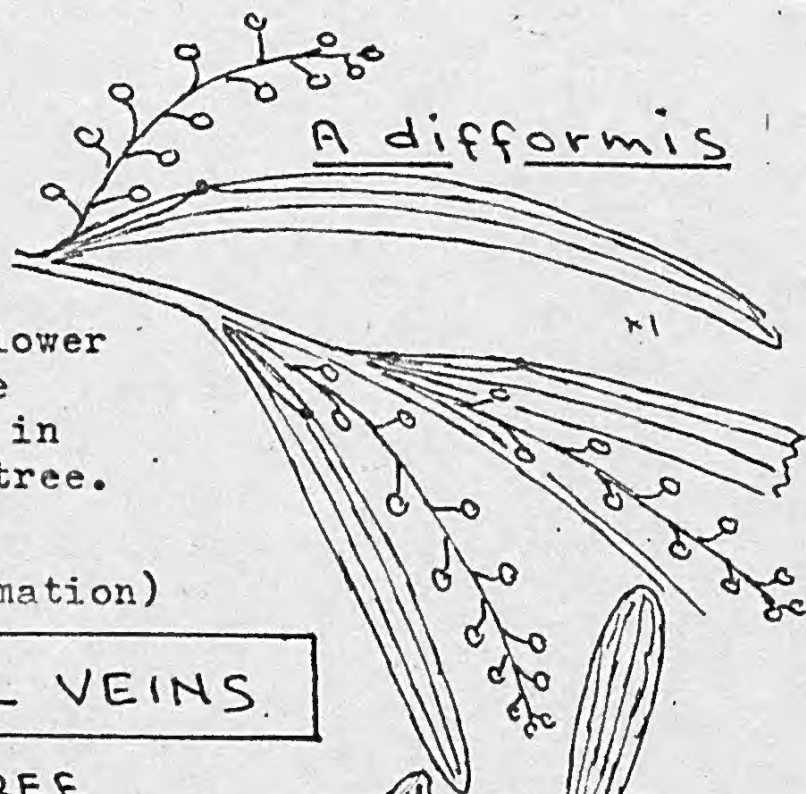
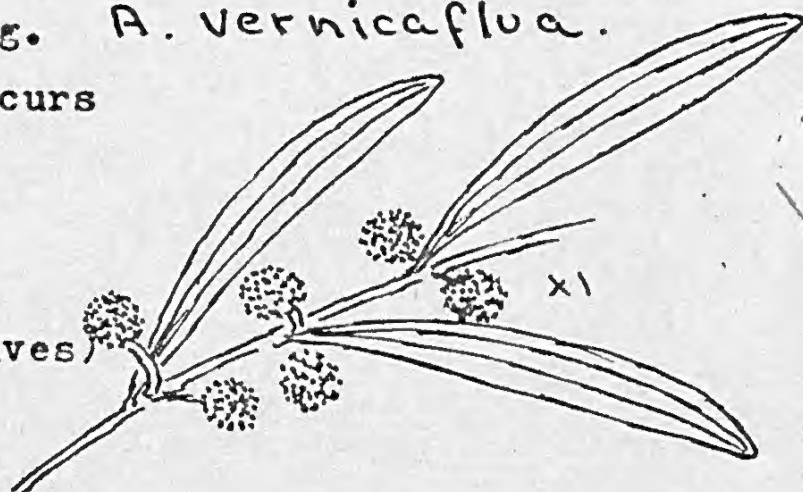
VARNISH WATTLE (from sticky leaves, hence vernicaflua = varnished leaves)

### B ONE VEIN FAINTER

Recognise by the faint second vein and the dull leaves. Note the gland on the upper leaf edge.

This is a rare wattle in Victoria; and the only known occurrence in this district is near Sandon. I have not seen the Sandon wattle in flower; other Victorian specimens flower in either winter or in January. The flowers are not conspicuous and are in dull yellow sprays. It is a small tree.

I do not know of any common name  
Acacia difformis (= of unusual formation)



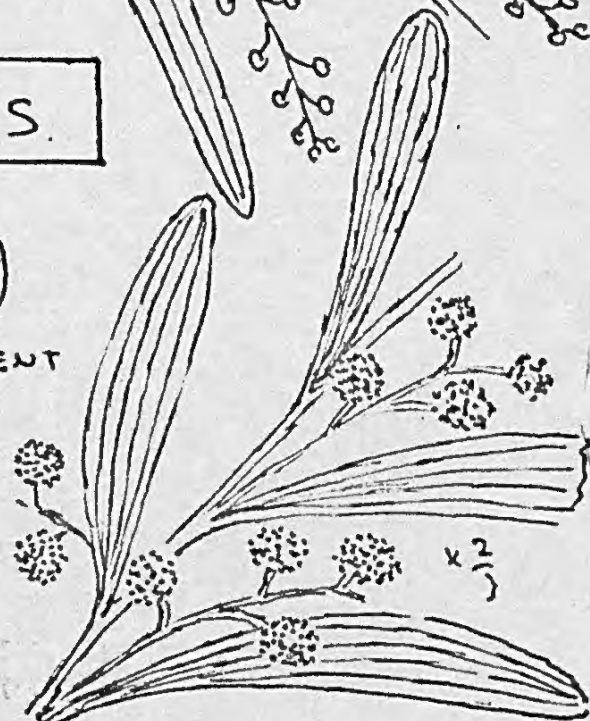
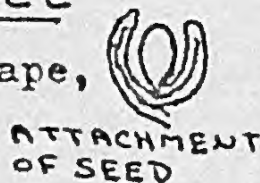
## LEAVES WITH PARALLEL VEINS

### A. SPRING FLOWERING TREE

Recognise Blackwood by the leaf-shape, the small sprays of pale flowers in spring and by the way the seeds are attached to the pods.

Blackwood is widely spread in the district but grows best in moist gullies. In hard conditions it may be a medium shrub.

BLACKWOOD (from colour of the wood)  
*A. melanoxylon* = black wood



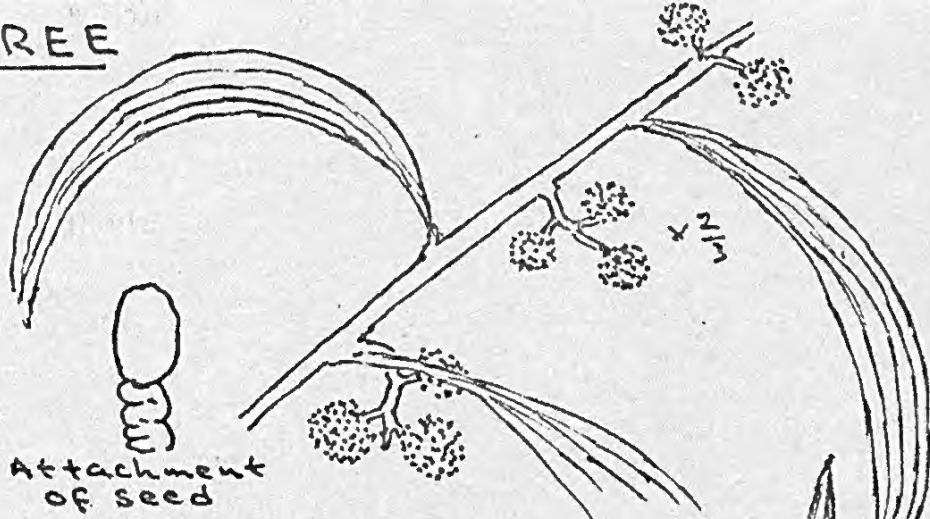
BLACKWOOD *A melanoxylon*



## B SUMMER FLOWERING TREE

Recognise LIGHTWOOD by the sickleshaped leaves, the sprays of pale flowers in summer and by the way the seeds are attached to the pods.

The leaves of young plants may be very long (up to 30 cm) and narrow. Lightwood is scattered through the district, particularly in granite areas e.g. Dunolly Road, just past Maldon. LIGHTWOOD (from colour of the wood). Implexa = entangled



LIGHTWOOD

*A. implexa*

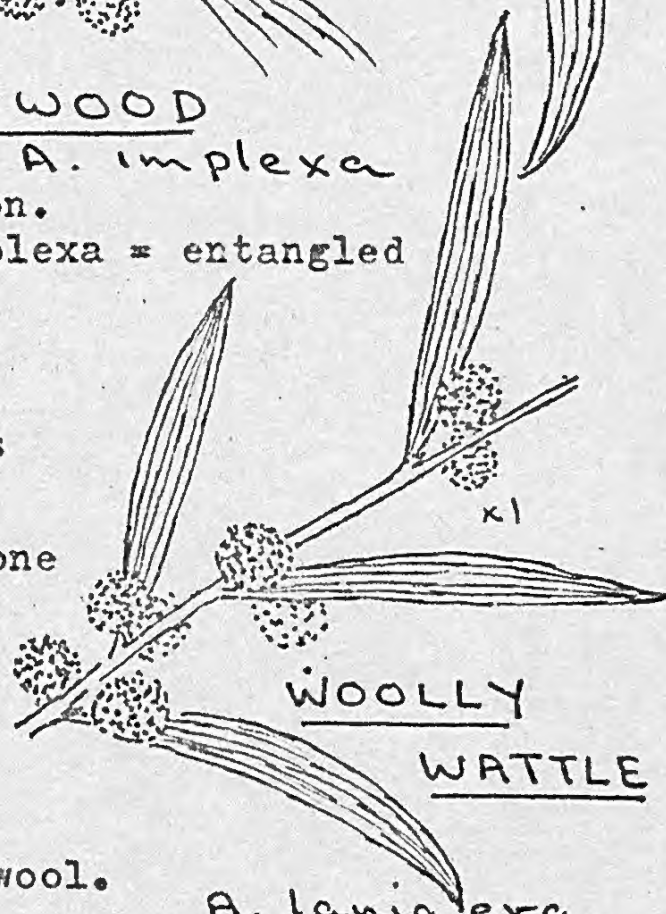
## C LOW SHRUB

Recognise WOOLLY WATTLE by its size, the sharp-pointed slightly woolly leaves and the grey furry seed pods.

Woolly wattle is common on the Elphinstone Ridge Road. It occurs also in the Mandurang area.

Flower balls may be bright or pale yellow in late winter - early spring. The flower stalks are short.

WOOLLY WATTLE hence lanigera = bearing wool.



WOOLLY

WATTLE

*A. lanigera*

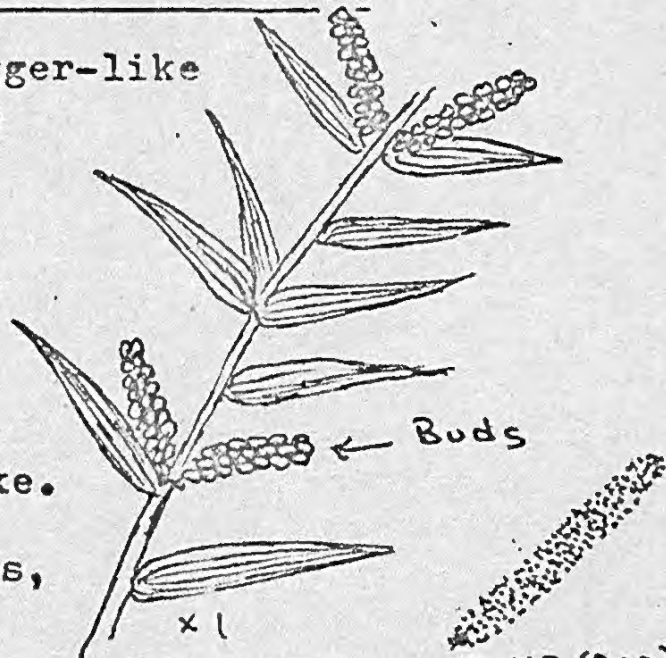
## D LARGE SHRUB WITH SPIKE FLOWERS

Recognise SPIKE WATTLE by the sharp dagger-like leaves and the rod-shaped flowers. The leaves may be single or in clusters.

Spike wattle is rare in this district, being found in the Ridge Road area e.g. Porcupine Ridge Road. Flowers are bright yellow in spring.

SPIKE WATTLE from the flower shape. Oxycedrus = sharp pointed and cedar-like.

(There are small spines, called stipules, at the base of the leaves. Compare with Hedge Wattle)



SPIKE WATTLE

*A. oxycedrus*

SPIKE (ROD) FLOWER

## LEAVES WITH A SINGLE VEIN

### A PAIR OF SHARP THORNS AT EACH LEAF BASE

Recognise HEDGE WATTLE by the sharp prickles at each leaf base and by the wavy-edged leaves. The leaves are about 1.5 cm long and lie more or less parallel to the branches. Flowers are golden balls on stalks from the leaf bases. Flowering time is spring. It is a widely spread shrub. Because of the prickles it gives protection to birds.



HEDGE WATTLE  
*A paradoxa*  
(formerly *A armata*)

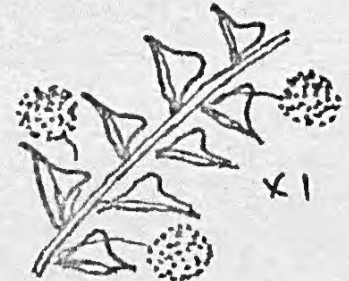
There is a fine patch of Hedge Wattle a few kilometres on the Newstead side of Campbelltown.

Paradoxa = puzzling.\*

### B LEAVES SMALL, ALMOST TRIANGULAR

Recognise PLOUGHSHARE WATTLE by the distinctive leaves.

It is a low spreading shrub with pale flowers in spring. It is widespread but seldom abundant. The patch in the Muckleford Forest is unusually thick.



PLOUGHSHARE  
WATTLE

### C LEAVES 5cm LONG or LESS *A gunnii*

There are two species, both low shrubs.

GOLD-DUST WATTLE (*A. acinacea*) is recognised by the small (1 - 1.5 cm) shiny green leaves. There is often a short hooked point.

It is widespread and common on the goldfields and often grows to only about 20 cm. In good conditions it will grow to several metres.

GOLD=DUST - from colour of flowers. An apt name in view of its association with gold fields.

Acinacea = dagger like.



\* *A. paradoxa* was named by De Candolle. The name reflects the variation between specimens examined.



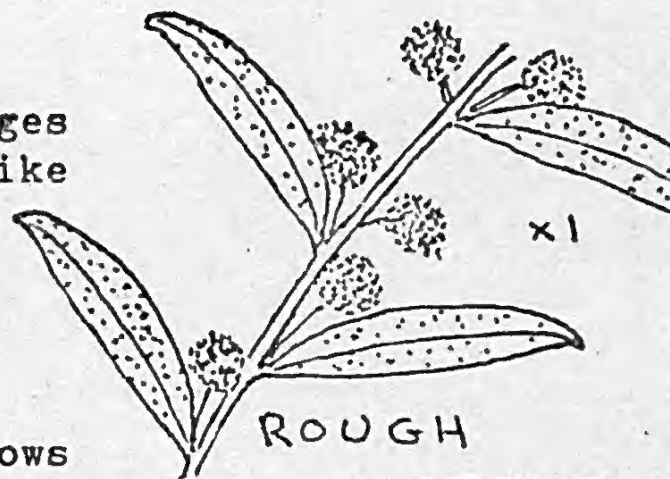
## ROUGH WATTLE (*A. aspera*)

Recognise by the rough, slightly hairy leaves; by the central vein and leaf edges which are raised ridges; by the burr-like flower buds; and by the shrubby habit.

The flowers are bright yellow in spring. Leaves are usually about the size shown but may be half this.

Rough wattle is widespread and often grows in thick patches, e.g. Kaweka near the Turner St entrance.

*aspera* = rough



ROUGH  
WATTLE  
*A. aspera*.

## D LEAVES LARGE (over 5 cm long)

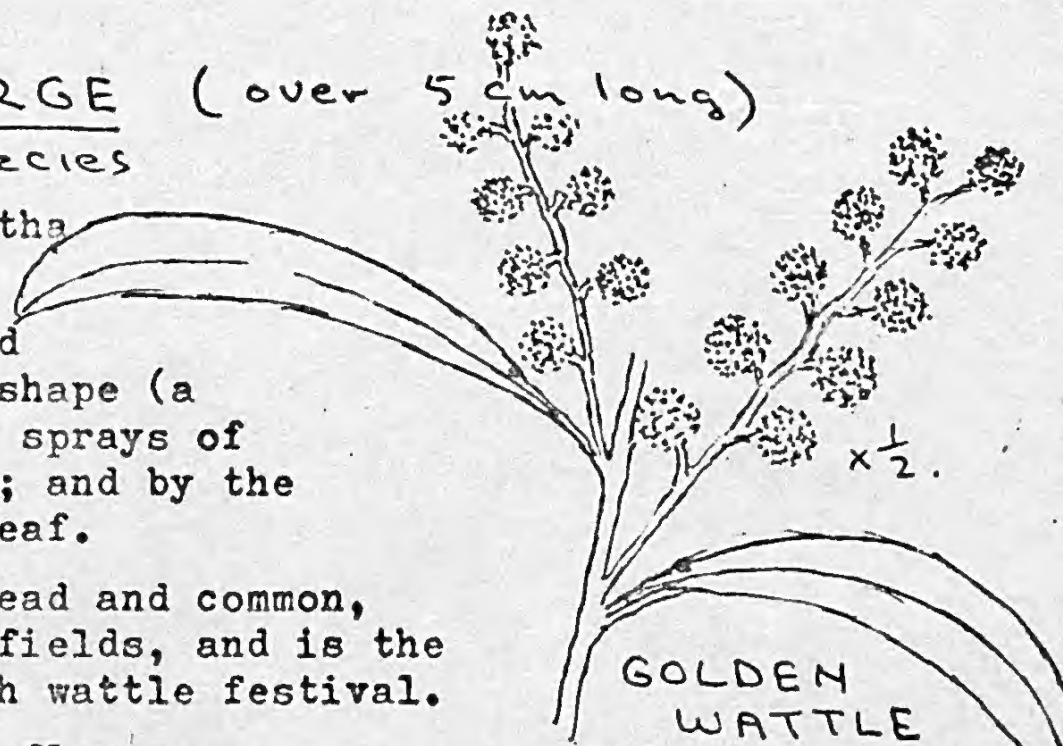
There are 2 species

### GOLDEN WATTLE *A. pycnantha*

Recognise by the large (about 10 cm long) curved shiny green leaves; the shape (a small spindly tree); the sprays of golden flowers in spring; and by the prominent gland on the leaf.

Golden wattle is widespread and common, particularly on the goldfields, and is the wattle of the Maryborough wattle festival.

*pycnantha* = covered with flowers.



GOLDEN  
WATTLE  
*A. pycnantha*

### WIRILDA *A. retinodes*.

Recognise by the dull bluish leaves; the size (a large bushy shrub); the rather inconspicuous gland; and the fairly pale flowers in late spring. The leaves are smaller and less curved than those of Golden Wattle.

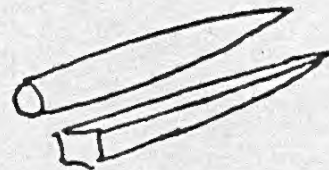
Wirilda is scattered throughout the district. The form of Wirilda sold by nurseries is often quite different, with narrower glossy green leaves. This form flowers over much of the year, mainly in the early part of the year.

WIRILDA - an aboriginal name  
*retinodes*-resinous, referring to the gum.



WIRILDA  
*A. retinodes*

# WATTLES WITH CYLINDRICAL LEAVES



There are two species

## SPREADING WATTLE *A. genistifolia* (formerly *A. diffusa*)

Recognise by the stout, sharp pointed leaves, and by the very pale flowers. The leaves point sideways or forwards, never backwards.

Spreading wattle is common throughout the goldfields. Flowering may begin in January (e.g. in the Vaughan area) but close to Castlemaine most flower in Winter. The flowering time is well spread out and some flowers can be found well into spring. It is a straggling shrub, hence SPREADING WATTLE.

*genistifolia* = with -like leaves.

## THIN-LEAF WATTLE *A. aculeatissima*

Recognise by the size (a low shrub, or even prostrate) and the small (about 1 cm) sharp leaves, at least some of which point backwards.

It has yellow flowers in spring.

Thin-leaf wattle is scattered in the district.

*aculeatissima* = with small pointed prickles.

## REFERENCE

A field guide to VICTORIAN WATTLES by F.J.C. Rogers, Revised Edition, 1978.

Compiled by E. Perkins. The sketch to the right shows an unnamed species, restricted to only a few specimens growing on the Elphinstone Ridge. It is closely allied to Golden Wattle.

